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THE MAGIC OF VARAŽDIN

Autor u radu opisuje prve susrete s glazbom Ivana Krstitelja Vanhala radi čega je i započeo istraživački rad koji ga je doveo u Varaždin. Oduševljen što je u lokalnom Uršulinskom samostanu našao dokumente koje je sam Vanhal pisao, autor vjeruje, kako sam kaže, da je našao mjesto gdje je Vanhal našao sebe.

A few short weeks ago via email I met Dada Ruža. Once again, after 43 years and in the twenty-first century modern world, Varaždin has exerted its charm on me!

Many moons before that I had responded to Allan Badley's letter which told of the possibility that a meeting of the Johann Baptist Wanhal Association could be held in Varaždin: "I'm particularly happy with the notion of attending something in Varaždin. I spent some very-pleasant days there while examining the little archive in the Ursulinerin Kloster and found that it contained dated material (and realized that it even included the only symphony in autograph I ever found) along with another symphony and several liturgical pieces. I photographed all the music and checked the watermarks as usual. It led to considerable later correspondence with Ladislav Sabin and others in the Institute in Zagreb. And while there I was able to talk with local people and obtain material about the area and to establish a warm relationship with the sisters in the convent. A concert based on the autograph stuff in the Convent – includes both symphonies and liturgical items – would be really possible and appropriate. That material shows what Wanhal was actually doing during the period that the old-timers said he was going crazy. In truth a case could be made that he 'found himself' there."

Now after reviewing correspondence and rethinking about those two days I'm more nostalgic particularly after receiving Dada's letter. Ten years ago I would

have planned to attend this meeting of Wanhal's Association and to contribute a paper or participate in some special way. But today's realities dictate otherwise.

There were several especially memorable events in my long search for Wanhal and his symphonies. The first was in 1948 when, as a graduate student at the University of Michigan, I received letters from Jens Peter Larsen and Alfred Einstein that steered me toward Wanhal and his symphonies. The second was when another letter informed me that I had been awarded a generous grant. It enabled me and my family to live in Vienna from where, during the year 1967-68, I traveled to more than sixty European archives from Venice in the south to Copenhagen in the north in order to study manuscript copies of his symphonies. The little archive in Varaždin was not listed in Eitner's *Biographisch-bibliographisches Quellen-Lexikon* or in the many available catalogs that listed the contents of the most important European archives.

The third special occasion was in August 1970. I was still puzzling over the question about why Wanhal refused Baron Riesch's invitation to take over the leadership of his new Kapelle in Dresden – especially after he spent more than a year in Italy at the Baron's expense while preparing himself for the job. Clearly Count Erdödy had trumped the Baron and rescued Wanhal by giving him a job in the Ursulin convent on his lands in Varaždin. So I acceded to the irresistible urge to take the same path. Heeding Kálmán's appropriate words from *Gräfin Mariza* to "*Komm mit nach Varaždin wo die Rosen blüh'n*" I flew to Vienna and from there to Varaždin where during two days August 21-22, 1970 I spent several hours in the Ursulin Convent. Here I found Wanhal in the place where he found himself.

Those hours were among the most poignant moments in my long search for Wanhal. I returned home satisfied that for the first time I had brushed against him personally. After many years of dealing with the impersonality of printed sources for information that had been filtered through the fertile minds of writers with their own agendas and analysing printed copies of his symphonies to produce a dissertation, suddenly I was able to touch dated autographs and the paper he had written on – not in a museum but in the place where he actually lived. Here I could sense the ethereal atmosphere of the place to which he had retreated so many years ago. Only recently have I realized that here in this convent he perceived the way he must go (and not go) in pursuing his unique career in Vienna – from where he apparently never strayed for the remainder of his life. There seems to be no evidence that he even visited the many monasteries where his works are found. (All of them doubtless had town houses in Vienna.) Enigmatically, even though all of his music was dedicated to God, he never joined the clergy. Nor did he marry even though, as Dlabáčz tells us, his appearance and personal qualities were most attractive.

Regarding the autograph copies of his music: there were more here than anywhere else I had previously or since visited. Most of the compositions were music for the church and included parts for a little orchestra of the usual strings and two horns but lacked parts for oboes. Here he had indeed been a Kapellmeister with all of its onerous attendant responsibilities. Furthermore he realized that, lacking a family, he could support himself through the fruits of his labors as a composer. He could overcome the odious feelings inherited as an indentured serf to Count Schaffgotsch and avoid serving at the behest of a rich patron – as did other composers including Mozart and his father and the Haydn brothers. Indeed subsequent records show him rubbing elbows with dignitaries from abroad (including Charles Burney and John Bland) as well as Viennese nobility such as Counts Erdödy, Lichnowsky, Thun etc.

Especially exciting was the discovery of a previously unknown symphony that I could declare to be unquestionably Wanhals because it was in his hand which identified it as *Symphonia ex C*. As with his sacred music, it concluded with *O A M: De Gloria*. Even though it was only a single movement for strings I designated it C28 in my catalogue of his symphonies. There was also a copy of G7 in another hand. Its very appearance in the archive loaned special significance to its authenticity, one of my most difficult problems in dealing with Wanhals's symphonies.

I also met charming Sister Pia who, in spite of her limited training, had been charged with caring for the little archive. My memory of happenings forty three years ago is not too sharp. But she immediately made me feel very much at home and comfortable in that serene atmosphere. I don't remember in what language we communicated. But I do recall that she was eagerly helpful to provide for my requests including helping when the bulb blew out in the light box I was using for the important job of tracing watermarks. And she was eager to learn – genuinely grateful for suggestions I made about such things as placing some loose pages in their proper folders. I wasn't sure she understood, and my notes say "I wonder what she'll do". I've always been curious about what she comprehended from my attempt to teach her.

Even in that short span of time I sensed what Dada describes as "the great love and admiration for Sister Pia that was "known widely and could be felt between the Convent walls." I too was smitten, and by the time I departed, I wanted to hug her affectionately as a dear friend – which would have been, at the very least, poor protocol! After returning home I sent her a thank-you letter and *einige Süßigkeiten*. You can perhaps not imagine how profoundly touched I was when a year later the news arrived contained in a black-lined note telling me that "notre chère Soeur Marie Pija Lončar had "piously left this world Dec. 11, 1971 fortified

by the sacraments of our Holy Mother Church in the 76th year of her life and in the 54th year since taking the Holy Orders. Jesus, my merciful Sweet Heart of Mary be my salvation; Rest in Peace.”

I was comforted, however, by the thought that Sister Pia had requested that I be informed. I believe she wanted me to know because she sensed my gratitude for the convent’s hospitality for Johann Baptist Wanhal who was nurtured by her predecessors many years ago and the eager help she gave me for a few hours in 1970. I’d like to think she would have welcomed a hug from me! Unfortunately I can’t find a single photo I took of her although it’s almost inconceivable that I didn’t. I hope there is at least one that I may now see.